

*O. Yu. Zavyalova, E. L. Nikiforova*

## THE LEGEND ABOUT KONDOLON

Saint Petersburg State University, 7–9, Universitetskaya nab., St. Petersburg, 199034, Russian Federation

This article presents a new version of Legend of Kondolon, the main patron of the Manden hunters, recorded in 2016 in Nyagassolya village (Northern Guinea). We've done the analysis of this version and compared it with some other well-known versions of the myth about Kondolon and Saane.

There are several variants of the myth about the founders of the hunters Kondolon and Saane. The text presented in of the article can be defined as a legend that explains the origin of the hunters' main fetish Kondolon. Refs 10.

*Keywords:* Oral tradition, myth, Manden (Manding) people.

### ЛЕГЕНДА О КОНДОЛОНЕ

*О. Ю. Завьялова, Е. Л. Никифорова*

Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет, Российская Федерация, 199034, Санкт-Петербург, Университетская наб., 7–9

В настоящей статье представлена новая версия Легенды о Кондолоне, основном покровителе охотников манден, записанная в 2016 году в деревне Ньягассоля (Северная Гвинея).

Авторы дают анализ данной версии и сравнение ее с некоторыми другими известными вариантами мифа о Кондолоне и Саане. Охотничья традиция народов манден (Западная Африка) играет важную роль для африканцев. Это традиционный институт, не утративший значения и после распространения ислама. До сих пор в области Манден (Северная Гвинея) сохраняются союзы охотников.

Есть несколько вариантов мифа, повествующего о рождении братства охотников. Представленный в статье текст можно определить как легенду, объясняющую происхождение магического фетиша охотников Кондолон. По различным версиям мифа Кондолон и Саане — основатели братства охотников, брат и сестра (муж и жена или сын и мать). Библиогр. 10 назв.

*Ключевые слова:* устная традиция, миф, народы манден.

The hunting tradition of the West Africa, in particular that of the Manden, still plays an important role in the life of African people. It is one of the traditional institutions, which has not lost its importance with the advent of Islam.

Today, a lot of men in Manden, (the North Guinea), are included in the Union of Hunters. By the words of our informants who hold Manden tradition, only soldiers, the so-called “guardians of the quiver”, earlier could become the members of the Union of Hunters (the materials of the expedition of 1999. Guinea). However, in the myth about Saane and Kondolon (Yusuf Cisse's version) it was mentioned that the first hunters did not belong to any clan or nation, they had no homeland, they lived where the wildfowl was (Saane herself was not born and she did not know the men, although she gave birth to Kondolon [1]).

The Union of Hunters is a supra-ethnic organization, not correlated with so-called clans (jamu), at least today that is so. It should be noted that the Manden have a concept of ‘Donso’ — a hunter, member of the Union of hunters, who was trained and passed the imitation ritual, and ‘Cikela’ — who is not a member of the union and can only hunt small

animals or birds without *nyama* energy [1, 192]. According to the head of the hunting union in Balandugu, a hunter 'heals' the victim. For example, before carving and eating a squirrel a hunter must first cut off her tail and attach certain herbs to this place, which he always carries with him on the hunt, (only the members of the Union of Hunters has the right to receive it). Hunters differ from the *cikelaw* as only they are allowed to use the given means which they take from the *soma* (fetishers). According to the hunters stories donso differs from the *cikela* as he is permitted to buy this remedy from sorcerers (*soma*), or to produce it themselves. There are certain rules of hunting also, for example, you can't shoot a squirrel on the ground, it is necessary to wait until it climbs up a tree. Hunters are forbidden to kill any pregnant wildfowl.

For Manden region, as for the whole West Africa, hunting is an important part of life. Twenty years ago, the informants believed that a person who did not belong to the Union of Hunters could not become president. This institution is very important and influential. Manden life values have formed largely on the basis of the hunting tradition. The most common example is Manden accentuated hospitality to a stranger. Rules and regulations are reflected in the folklore and indicate close interaction between people and nature, strong dependency of the society on the world of nature and of spirits, which, in spite of the Islamization of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is still relevant.

Hunters have become the most zealous guardians of traditions. The places of worship of spirit-patrons of the clans or villages are now being forgotten, while the hunters' rituals and places of worship of hunters' patrons are still relevant as we found it out during our expeditions in 2014, 2016.

Being in many ways the keepers of all the society's traditions, the hunters have also their own rich oral tradition. They have their own griots also, but if the ordinary griot receives his profession from the birth, the hunters griot is elected according to his talent, and can belong to any cast. At the same time they have a lot of functions besides the reciting of hunting legends; they also perform the '*fasa*' — praise songs or melodies, conduct ceremonial events and keep hunters' history.

In 1236 after Sunjata Keita had defeated Sumaoro Konte and founded the empire of Mali, the oath of hunters in Kurukan Fuga was given during the adoption of the Manden Charter or Manden Kalikan [2]. It has become one of the bases of the hunting traditions as well as the base of all Manden society. Thus the hunters' oath itself is directly related to the formation of the Mali Empire and the establishment of relationships' order in it. The main points of the oath of hunters are: maintaining of norms and rules of society, providing the population with food, the abolition of slavery, torture and humiliation of others, keeping the balance with nature, protecting the savannah.

Reasoning of these statements can be found in the myth about the first hunters, Kondolon and Saane, founders and patrons of the Union of Hunters (in different versions<sup>1</sup> they are husband and wife or brother and sister). We know more than 20 versions of this myth. We can doubt the origin of some of the oath's items and respective articles of the Charter. For example, slavery was prohibited by the both oral documents, but it disappeared only half a century ago. However, it was not the slavery in the European

---

<sup>1</sup> Yusuf Tata Cissé believes that personages of Sanènè and Kòntròn go back to Muso Koroni and Kèni, ie Niakalé N 'Djatarà and her twin Téliko, associated with the sun. The myth represented by Yusuf Cisse also tells about the origin of names Kondolon and Sana'a.

meaning, but a social mechanism of adaptation which was included in the so-called “caste” division of the Manden society.

During an expedition in 1999 in Niagassola (the Upper Guinea) when we were collecting the historical stories about origins of the villages, members of Tarawele family told us that they had derived from a family of slaves. Earlier their family had been the only one to be sacrificed to the spirit-patron of the village, thus the wellbeing of the whole society depended on them. Human sacrifice had been demanded almost by all the spirits-landowners and spirits-patrons, later it was replaced by sacrifice of a bull. In the legend of Kondolon the need of human sacrifice to the spirit-patron is also mentioned.

Basically all versions of the myth explain the origin of the Union of Hunters («children of Sanene and Kondolon»), names of its founders, and the basic behavioral standards supported by all hunters.

Our task is not only to give a new variant of a legend about Kontoron that was recited by Samaja Jaku Dumbuya the hunter griot (from the Jaku village), written down in Niagassola, but also to compare the general motives with some other variants of a myth about Kontoron and Saane. Now there are more than twenty versions of a myth about hunters' ancestors. The following variants were taken for the analysis and comparison:

1. The Version written down by Yusuf Sisse and introduced in his article «Le mythe des divinités tutélaires de la chasse: Sanènè et Kòntròn» [3].
2. The Version by Drissa Diakité Kuyatè [4].
3. Baala Jinba Diakite [5].
4. And the version written down by Ch. Bailleul, recited by Z. M. Kulibali on December, 13th, 2008 in village Falaje (historical area of Beledugu).
5. Version written down during expedition of 2016 to Guinea, recited by Samaya Jaku Dumbuya the hunter griot (from the village Jaku).

The complete version written down during expedition of 2016 to Guinea:

Kòntòròn, bon, àn bé sé kà dó fò à ró kómi à básilama. Kòntòròn tún yé jìnei bólo kùngo kòno. Ní kán Fakumbe mín ma ní, Fakumbe ó y'à sòro à té bèrè bó. Ó y'à sòro à mà bonya kòsebe. Á fá k'a sòro, fá k'è sa, bá fana k'è sa. Á dílen tère mín fana mà ó k'a lámò ó fana k'è sa. Sísan mògòw nana à yé dugu kòno k'a fò kònin nín yé dén mín yé nín té dén na màrata yé.

Parce que àdamadén-ò-àdamadén ní í bé hère sòro í té k'è tògòtigi yé f'í k'a tòro fòlo quoi. Í nà fò é yé recherchir mìnna yé. Kó dàmina k'a gèlen quoi. Ní yé kó dàmina tòròta caman bé dá í kán. Ó dé kòsòn nà fò tellement kó nunun k'a jàn, í beré kó dàmina ní mà sé, mògòw bé sé k'a faamupali sòro à lá yòro mín ná. N'í mà sé k'a sé olú mà dòron à bé k'è í nà fò mògòw té kùn yé í k'a kuma lá quoi.

À tòròlen dugu kòno ó ró mògòw yé kuma kó jìna lé kó súbaga yé. Kó ní à tòra dugu kòno yàn, à na à fá ní à bá ní à róminabaga núnnu bée faga naminman yé. Á bée dugu fana ci tán kayi k'a taa k'a waa à láfilí kungo kòno à dénìnama. Á y'í k'a taa ó cògoya lá k'a waa à láfilí kungo kòno. Fakumbe, à yé kasila kungo kòno à dénìnama, à té sé k'a foyi k'è à yère yé. Duga mín yaaralan, nín duga ó lé k'a yé kó é! nín dénín yé kasila depuis kúnun. Kó nín fèn dó yé vraiment à hìne nana duga nín ná. Duga k'a tà kómi jìna núnnu aní dугaw kèrenkèrenneyala aní dònsoy bée yé fèn kèlen yé quoi. Ó k'a ta ó cògoya lá ó k'a sòro jìne kùntigi nín ó mùso kó Kafubaga dén tún tò bólo.

Ò kà dèn nìn yé dūga bólo. Dūga kó ò má kó né wàalen kà wàa dèn nìn sóro kà tilé fila yé nìn yé kà í kasilan kó mǎgɔnɪnfinnu tɛ sɔn nata kà wàa láfilí. Kungo kɔnɔ kó né kà damun né yé dó yé su lé damun na an tɛ panama damun na. Ó kò nalen kó kà ná dí í má kà bálo. Donc nà séra à bɛ sé kà kɛ dūgaw jigi yé dón dó.

Ála nàna dɛnin kà kó diya jinake nìn mùso yé. Jinake mùso kà dèn nìn na don kà ládon kana kɛ fɔ kà kó dón quoi. Ó yà sóro Kòntòrɔn nìn olé tɛrɛ jinake nìn bólo, jina dɔnsokɛ nìn bólo fàlan ná. San wòlɔnfilá-ò-wòlɔnfilá, à yé tún bɛ mǎgɔnɪnfin dó mɪna kà kɛ kà Kòntòrɔn nìn sɔn. Kòntòrɔn à basilama sisan quoi. Nò tɛ dɔɔni né tɛ sé fɛn fɔla ò kan olé dɔnsobaw tá yé.

Sàn wòlɔnfilá-ò-wòlɔnfilá à yé tún bɛ jìne bilà kà mǎgo dó jìni kò kɛ kà bási nìn sɔn. San wòlɔnfilá nàna kà ná sé à bɛrɛ mǎgo jìni fan bɛrɛ rɔ mǎgo kapalen sóro lá. Ála kà kɛ ò rɔ jina dó yé ò kó kó an yɛrɛ ná gwalen mǎgo jìni kó mǎgo yé an yɛrɛ bólo yan. K'an tɛ Kankubaga dèn nìn mɪna kó kó kɛ kó kà ná fake nìn sɔn nɪnan wa? Ó kò fɔ jinake yé: jìnamuso lé fàriman kà tɛmɛ jinake kan. Á lé dɔnsokɛ à mùso lé sé à lá, à lé sɔmake à mùso dɛ bɛ sé à lá. Jinake kó kó à né fɛ sé kà fɔla dɛ fɔ né à y'í d'an f'à yé bawò né bára f'à yé à bɛ kó bɛ lan kan. Parce que kó dèn t'à bólo dèn mɪn dón nalen kana dí à mà nìn, à dèn kà dí à yé. Né bára f'à yé, à bɛ kó kɛ lan kan. Á yé nalen kà ná fɔ jìnamuso yé. Jìnamuso kó kó alé ná sóro kà fɔ mǎgo mà alé tá nìn kó nìn tɛ kɛ Kòntòrɔn sɔn lá yé feu!

Á nàna à yé jan fa nalen bɔnya ná kà bɔnya. Kòntòrɔn mɪn yɛrɛ sɔntɔ y'à dí alé yɛrɛ tellement à kɛ y'à kún ná à y'a kó kuru lɔn. Alé yɛrɛ kà yé à lá nìn dèn nìn hinana à ní à ládiya n yé mɪn y'à dusukun dón. Á y'à lɔn fɛnɛ à bɛ kɛ fɛn mɪn dí dón nata quoi. Parce que mǎnsakɛ fitini í bà dón depuis à dɔgɔmanin fitini. Á y'a yé kà fɔ nunun kà janfa in. N'an mɛna nɛ fɛ à bɛ sé kà kɛ ní alé sara à y'í bɛrɛ kó kà lá soit à bɛ sé kà kɛ dó bɛ sé kà kó gbɛrɛ kɛ mɪn bɛ sé kà bɔnɛ nìn alé tá yé. Mùn tɛ kɛ lé ò rɔ, fɔ à kɛ à mabo à lá. Á kɛtɔ fɛn mɪn yɛrɛ fana nɔfɛ, à kó kuru bɛ fɔ pítini yé kà tila kà Kòntòrɔn nìn tá kà dí Fakumbe mà.

Bási Kòntòrɔn nìn dɔnya lé sɔ nìn. Kà dí Fakumbe mà. Ó dǎnkurun yé tún yàla n bɛ sé kà mùn fɔ à kan n ná mɪn mɛn n karamogo í lá ò lé ò dí. Ó tɔ yé yɛn à bɛ sé kà fɔ mana rɔ. Ní à mɛn kó Kòntòrɔn an yé à basilama mɪn lɔn à mà sɔrɔlɛn tanni.

### Translation:

“Well, we can tell something about Kondolon as a magic device. Spirits had it in the savannah. I’m going to tell you the story of Fakombe<sup>2</sup>, and he was still a baby those days. So he didn’t happen to grow up yet. When he was born, his father died and so did his mother. He was given to a woman to grow him up, — and she died too. And then people of the village came to him and assumed that this child should not be kept.

For all people to reach happiness and to become a well-known person, it is necessary to undergo a hardship at first. And here, Fakombe’s hardships in the village were that people began to say that he was a spirit or a malicious sorcerer. That if he was kept in the village, he would kill all inhabitants, just like he did it with his father, his mother and his wet nurse. While he was still small, he was thrown out to the savannah. Fakombe cried in the savannah, because he was still just a baby. He could not do anything by himself. There

<sup>2</sup> Fakombe is mentioned in a Charter of Manding art. 37. Fakombè was nominated chief of hunters» [6, p.11]. Griots said that the ancestor Fakombé had been elevated to the rank of hunters protecting deity that supervised in the Bush [7].

was a vulture<sup>3</sup> walking in the savannah, he saw Fakombe and said: «How! This child here has been crying since yesterday». The vulture felt pity for the baby. The vultures, as well as spirits, have always helped each other with hunters. Therefore the vulture took Fakombe and brought him to the leader of the spirits. His wife was called Kankubaga, and she did not have any children.

She saw the baby in the hands of the vulture. The vulture told that he had found this child having been crying for two days after bad people had thrown him out in the savannah for the scavengers to eat him. «But I eat only offal, I do not eat alive beings, — said the vulture. — I came to give him to you so that you will raise him, after all he can once become hope for the vultures».

On a God's will, Kankubaga liked the baby a lot. She began taking care of him and raised him, Fakombe started learning some things. The head of the spirits happened to have a magic means — kondolon. He stored in a temporary outhouse in the savannah (*faḷan*). Every 7 years one person was chosen to be sacrificed to Kondolon. We are talking about Kondolon as a magic means or of him as a fetish. Telling stories about him himself is the privilege of the heads of hunters.

Every 7 years it was charged to one of the spirits to find the person to be sacrificed to the fetish. The time has come, and the spirits were looking for a suitable person all over the village. One of them asked why they were searching so much when they already had a man in the first place. He said: «Why can't we just take the child of Kankubaga this year if his father agrees? » The head of the spirits answered: «The wife of spirit is stronger than the husband. And the hunter's wife is stronger than him; the fetisher's wife is stronger than him. Perhaps, you go and talk to her? If I speak to her, she will get angry at me. Because she does not have children of her own, but since that day she has got this boy, she has got so much joy from having him. If I suggest her giving him, she will get very angry at me». And they left to have a talk with Kankubaga. She told them that it was her child, and it in any way was impossible to be sacrificed to Kondolon.

She went to a remote place, all further and further. She knew all history of Kondolon, so she took him with her in the form of a magic means. Kondolon saw the child in her hands and felt pity for him. He knew, who he was destined to become in the future. Because you can recognize a future governor even when he is still small. He told Kankubaga: «If we keep him, then before his death he will do everything he is capable of. If he dies now that someone another will grow and become that, which he is destined to become». So they kept him. Then after some time she told all to the kid, and gave the magic Kondolon to Fakombe.

That is how the magic means of Kondolon has been brought home and has been given to Fakombe. This history which I can tell you, it is how I has heard it from my teacher. And you can hear the rest in the epos. If you hear amongst us “Kondolon” whom we know it in the form of magic means, here is how it has appeared.

#### Song:

Kòndòlòn yé jón kùn?  
Dònsò bási má Kòndòlòn bó!  
Dìbì Kòndòlòn yé jón kùn?

---

<sup>3</sup> *Duga* or *dugamasa* is considered sacred and its stories are sung by griots and hunters. Kakoli of Wagadou had the cult of the vulture.

Dònso mèn mánà Kòndòlòn tà,  
 Í mìn'í sidi yánfa mà,  
 Í mìn'í sidi kánunkéba mà,  
 Kòndòlòn d'í faga fúu!  
 Kánunké bási tẹ Kòndòlòn dǐ.  
 Fákómẹ lá fída yé jón né kùn?  
 Sòbo fàga bási ma Kòndòlòn bó.

**Translation:**

For whom Kondolon is necessary?  
 Any means cannot be compared to Kondolon!  
 For whom gloomy Kondolon is necessary?  
 The hunter who uses Kondolon,  
 If you have made treachery,  
 If you have made adultery,  
 Kondolon will kill you!  
 Kondolon is no love potion.  
 To whom are grasses of Fakome necessary?  
 Any means for murder of animals cannot be compared to Kondolon.

The given version is not a myth about the origin of hunters where Kondolon is person or spirit. First of all it is a legend about the origin of the magic hunters' fetish with the same name. Just like griot Samaya Dumbuya has said: "only the hunting-griot masters can tell the myth about Kondolone and Saane". The presence of the fetish and the legend about its origin of the Manden hunters is the particular feature of this version; anyway it has much in common with many variants of the basic hunting myth.

1. One of the first written variants of the myth (though with some religious motives, which, however, do not disturb the basic plot) has been presented by Youssouf Tata Cissé [3]. This is the most complete variant, which tells about the origin of names of the main hunting mythology's characters, and also explains sources of the hunting traditions and standards of their behavior.

There is a variant of the myth narrating about the birth of the hunting brotherhood. It was in Kombi, the capital of Wagadou, there the hunters lived: Siriman and Kadiali or Simbo. They wanted to create a real brotherhood of hunters, preaching grandfather's courage, fearlessness and honor. Bida, the immortal snake<sup>4</sup>, still lived there. Sphinxes<sup>5</sup>, the avatars of great governors of Wagadou, and lynxes only came into this overgrown savannah. Two young Kakolo<sup>6</sup> (maninka ancestors), Simbo and Siriman, went hunting for lynx to show that, in spite of the hostile environment, they were descendants of their ancestors Diaruw. On their way they met a Kakolo woman whose parents lived on other side of those lands — she was carrying a child on her back. Suffering from thirst, the hunters killed the child and took away the calabash with water from the woman. God punished them making them quarrel: their dogs tore each other, and then the hunters also killed one another. The woman threw stones on their bodies damning them. Then

<sup>4</sup> Immortal snake, which lived in Wagadou and required human sacrifice. [8, p. 241–251].

<sup>5</sup> Sunjata was also called «Sphinx» see ibid. volume 2

<sup>6</sup> The author considers them to be the "maninka ancestors" (ka koro — to be old), though kakolo could be 'kagoro' — a sub-group of the Mande.



God asked her what she wanted — after all he had made justice having killed hunters and their dogs. But the woman answered that she could never revenge for the murder of her innocent child. Then God inhaled life in bodies of the both hunters again. They revived and swore that they would become children for this woman. ‘Saa nènè’ and ‘kòtòròn’ means respectively ‘the cold of death’ and ‘to come back [to life]’. They followed the woman to her village and performed the redemptive ritual and a ritual to propitiate animals which they would kill and bring for her. The hunters gave an oath (kalikan) that they would be harmless as children were, and established the ceremonials based on any soul’s protection.

The body of the killed child was buried in a place named ‘*dankun*’, which was corresponded to the space, belonged simultaneously to three areas: to inhabited land, wild thickets where wildfowl lived, and to cultivated lands (crossing *dugu*, *wula* and *nako*).

And since then all hunters of the Manden world are called “the children of Saene and Kònròn”.

2. Version of Drissa Diakite [9], in which we can find the name of Fa Kome, is of interest for us also. The given plot is similar to our variant as there is not only a personage Fa Kome, but a woman transmits all the secrets to hunters by means of Kondolon (though in this version, she is a spirit). But it should be noted, that in the version written down in Niagassola the fetish Kondolon is “animated” in some ways — «it liked the boy and he warned the wife of spirit that the boy would become a great leader».

According to this version Saane was a daughter of Fa Kome, the legendary hunter. She was friends with Kòndòlòn, the forest spirit which enabled her to master the secrets of the savannah and the language of its animals and Kòndòlòn allowed telling all the secrets to all other hunters. So Saane and Kondolon have taught hunters all their secrets and so hunters worship them exactly as their spirit-defenders.

3. In the version of the myth by Baala Jinba Diakite [5] the Hunter Mambi stole a magical fetish of Kontoron from the spirit-protector of the savannah called Nyama. He killed the spirit and buried his head in *dankun*. Besides Kòtòròn Mambi also took a musical instrument *Sinbi* away from the spirit, only Nyama himself could play it. This plot is similar to a story about the magic balafon of Sumaoro in the epic about Sunjata. This famous balafon which now is stored in Niagassola has a large quantity of *nyama* concentrated in it, so it was wrapped up in a winding sheet so that the energy would not spread. The griots may play it only a couple of times a year on great occasions (for example, on a funeral of great griots).

Mambi also took Nyama’s wife with him, later a daughter was born, and they named her Saaneba, she inherited fetish Kontoron and became a great hunter. After her death, Saane and Kontoron became objects of hunters’ worship.

Almost all versions of the myth about Sana’a and Kondolon explain that the basic knowledge and skills of hunters and their fetishes (bóli or bási<sup>7</sup>) were in one way or another obtained from the spirits. In some versions guardian-spirits appear (jínε or jína), in others — dwarf-spirits living in the forest (wòkilò or kòmòkodonin<sup>8</sup>). In Niagassola hunt-

<sup>7</sup> basi — fetish, magical means. In Nyagassolya the word usually means a magic tool *basi* (more) may be a remedy, usually in powder form; however, here it means an idol, a kind of a thing containing a magical power Nyama.

<sup>8</sup> Our informants in Niagassola and Balandugu told us that kòmokuru/kòmokudunin are spirits of small height (1–1,5 meters) with long straight hair (“similar to pineapple”) and long arms. They live

ers told us that the spirits who hunt and can help hunters are called *gére*, *kómokodonin* or *wòkiló*, the later, however, is more dangerous and vicious than *gére*<sup>9</sup>. Spirits (*jíne*) to Manden often serve as teachers or assistants; they are the true owners of the land, so they largely appear in all the legends about the origins of villages, epic legends and fairy tales. Hunters say that they and “spirits are engaged in the same activity” — they watch over the order in the savannah. So in the version before us, it is the spirits play a major role in saving Fakombe, though they should offer him to a fetish. And when the people wanted to kill him, then it is the savannah animal and spirits who rescue him, and through him the people are given a strong fetish and the hunting secrets.

In one version of the myths recorded by Charles Bailleul in 2008 in the village of Falaje, a killing of a pregnant hyena<sup>10</sup> was followed by a removal of the dead cub and its burial. In other versions — motif of the infanticide is also found in the myth about Kondolon. In many fairy tales and legends there also are motives of killing or wounding of a spirit's child (by mistake) that leads then through the redemption to friendship and mutual assistance between spirits and humans. Often it is a story of persecution or attempted murder of the child by people from his village, and then the animals or spirits help him and save him. All this shows the relationship of two worlds, emphasizing the inhostility of the alien world and the need for mutual understanding with it. For hunters it is important to take care of young animals in the savanna and pregnant animals, in order to maintain the population. This prohibition specifically is stipulated in the oath of hunters.

The main subject of almost all variants of the myth is dedication (mother to son, brothers or husbands<sup>11</sup>). Most of the known variants of this myth focus on the origins of hunting system of relations, «the code of honor», rather than on the origin of their union. The citizens of Niagassola claim Sana'a and Kondolon to be hunters, brother and sister, but no one could answer why a woman had been going on a hunt, which is contrary to all norms of behavior in Manden. Much more logical is to assume that they were two brothers (as in the first version of the myth), that is consonant with the story about the brothers in the epic about Sundiata.

---

in forests, not far from rivers, they can often be found in the branches of the mango tree. They know all mysteries of the forest. Some told that *kómokuru* can give you a headache, if you meet him in the savannah. Some reconed that *wòkiló* and *wòkuló* and *kómokuru* are the same creature, others claimed them to be different. In Conakry In Conakry told that they are to live in forests and their feet are turned backwards (the same in Mali). The description of these spirits can be found also in the article by Yousseuf Cissé « Les nains et l'origine des boli de chasse chez les Malinké » [10].

<sup>9</sup> In Balaninkoro these spirits were described as fat dwarves with long hair of a major strength, having black skin, being able to speak to humans (description similar to *kómokodonin* and *wòkiló*). They can live anywhere: either in the savannah, or in the village. Some people say that they are usually invisible, although one of the informants, Bala Keita (Niagassola) claimed that these spirits can be seen and even talked to, but they can also kill a man. Among the bamana *gwéde* is a hunter spirit of short height.

<sup>10</sup> The episode with the murdered hyena has no logical continuation in the version transcribed by C. Bailleul and is probably a rudiment of the earlier versions, a motif practically forgotten that lost its meaning. However the hyena was a totemic animal of one of the most influential secret communities, it was a symbol of wisdom and longevity (traces of which can be found in the archaic fairy tales), after disintegration of this community the image of a hyena has become a symbol of foolishness and greediness, as it is described in the most fairy tales.

<sup>11</sup> In different versions Sanene can be Kondolon's mother, wife, sister or she-friend. References to *badenya* и *fadenya* are quite often — matrilineal or patrilineal relation between brother and sister simultaneously, — it is an aspect often accented in the epics of the West Africa.



Yu. Sisse suggests Sanene being a mother to Kondolon, as a mother's love is more pure and faithful<sup>12</sup>. In the Manden epic tradition a mother or a matrilineal sister is usually the source of absolute support and sacrifice to a man, but not his wife. A wife in the stories and in the hunting tales will soon act in the form of traitor. In the legend recorded in Nyagassolya theme of motherly love is also great, although the mother of Fakome was not biological, but her love and devotion to him is even more pronounced. Kondolon in some stories protects a hunter from an unfaithful wife; rejection from adultery is included in the hunters' oath (for hunters who spend all day and night in the bushes the question of adultery is very relevant), which, in turn, can speak in favor of the version about the wife and husband. But it seems to us that it is more recent myth variants, as the theme of love and loyalty is especially not typical for classical oral traditions of the Manden. The recorded version of the legend does not include explanation of the concept of dankun, although the hunters in Nyagassolya and Balandugu go there (dankun) as to a place of worship (soliyoro), where only members of the Union of Hunters can come. They worship Kondolon and Sana'a there and make sacrifices. In some versions of the myth dankun is a burial place (of a child, the head of Kondolon, or of a spirit called Nyama). In the version recorded by Bailleul there is no explanation of the emergence of the dankun, but the motif of the murdered baby hyena echoes in the story of the child who was killed (although there is no its further development) and states that it was laid on the ground, where we can see the similarity with the explanation of the dankun. Anyway, in most cases dankun is referred to as a burial place of great Nyama energy. The specific feature of the version told in Nyagassolya is that Kondolon is a fetish and not a spirit or a person, there is no Sana'a, but the story Fakombe, great hunter, is told.

The above versions of the legend of Kondolone Sana'a are very different. The second one claimed to be the fundamental myth seems really more archaic, but the appearance of God as an active protagonist is doubtful, because this character is not typical for the traditional myth Bamana. The myth itself is aimed primarily to explain the origin of the ethics of hunters, and also gives the etymology of the origin of the names of the founders of the hunters. The version of Nyagassolya stands apart as devoted not to the hunters themselves, but to a fetish carrying their name. Note that in Nyagassolya everyone is familiar with the version about a man and a woman (husband and wife or brother and sister), the hunters who became the founders of the Union of Hunters. This legend storyteller himself directly pointed that he cannot tell the myth of Kondolon and Sana'a, as it can only be done by a head the hunting union and union chief griots hunters. In our version there are key points similar with versions Baala Jinba Diakite, where Kontoron also as a potent fetish, derived from a spirit, is also involved, as well as the wife of the spirit. In addition Kòntòròn Manbi managed to win Sinbi.

There also is a similarity with a version of Drissa Diakite, where hunter Fa Kome Saane's father, who becomes patron of hunters along with his friend Kontoron.

## References

1. Cissé Yousouf. Notes sur les sociétés de chasseurs malinké. *Journal de la Société des Africani fascicule* 2, pp. 175–226. doi : 10.3406/jafr.1964.1383. Available at: [http://www.persee.fr/doc/jafr\\_0037-9166\\_1964\\_num\\_34\\_2\\_1383](http://www.persee.fr/doc/jafr_0037-9166_1964_num_34_2_1383) (accessed: 27.11.2016).

<sup>12</sup> Yu. Sisse quotes the hunters who claimed saying Sanene was Kondolon's wife was blasphemy [1, p. 178].

2. *La Charte des Chasseurs du Mandé* / FASOKAN. Available at: <https://fasokan.wordpress.com/2014/02/03/manden-donsolu-kalikan/> (accessed: 02.12.2016).
3. Cissé Youssouf Tata propos recueillis par Alexandre Mensah. *Africultures*. N33. Available at: <http://www.africultures.com/php/?nav=article&no=1627> (accessed 15.11.2016)
4. Drissa Diakité. *Kuyatè, la force du serment: Aux origines du griot mandringue*. Harmattan, 2009. 206 p.
5. *La chasse et les chasseurs au Mali*. Available at: <http://www.haskovi.org/spip.php?article41> (accessed: 11.12.2016).
6. *La Charte de Kurukan Fuga: Aux sources d'une pensée politique en Afrique*. CELHTO, Paris, 2008. Available at: [http://unipd-centrodirittiumani.it/public/docs/Charte\\_de\\_Kurukan\\_Fuga.pdf](http://unipd-centrodirittiumani.it/public/docs/Charte_de_Kurukan_Fuga.pdf) (accessed: 29.10.2016).
7. Cissé Youssouf Tata (2003). *La charte du Mandé et autres traditions du Mali*. Paris, Albin Michel, 2003. 64 p.
8. Youssouf Tata Cissé, Wa Kamissoko. *La Grande Geste du Mali. Des origines à la fondation de l'Empire*. Paris, Karthala, 1988, 2<sup>e</sup> édition 2007.
9. Drissa Diakité Kuyatè. *La force du serment: Aux origines du griot mandringue*. L'Harmattan, 2009. 206 p.
10. Youssouf Cissé. Les nains et l'origine des boli de chasse chez les Malinké. *Systèmes de pensée en Afrique noire*, 1987, no. 8. Available at: <http://span.revues.org/1012> (accessed: 23.08.2016). DOI : 10.4000/span.1012-

**For citation:** Zavyalova O. Y., Nikiforova E. L. The legend about Kondolon. *Vestnik SPbSU. Asian and African Studies*, 2017, vol. 9, issue 2, pp. 220–229. DOI: 10.21638/11701/spbu13.2017.209.

Received 01.12.2016  
Accepted 28.02.2017

#### Контактная информация

Завьялова О. Ю. — кандидат филологических наук; [jontan@mail.ru](mailto:jontan@mail.ru)  
 Никифорова Е. Л. — [nikikatileo@gmail.com](mailto:nikikatileo@gmail.com)  
 Zavyalova O. Yu. — PhD; [jontan@mail.ru](mailto:jontan@mail.ru)  
 Nikiforova E. L. — [nikikatileo@gmail.com](mailto:nikikatileo@gmail.com)